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## National edifices at Washington

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NATIONAL EDIFICES AT WASHINGTON.

FEBRUARY 25, 1845.

Read, and laid upon the table.

Mr. PRATT, from the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, made the following

REPORT :

*The Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, having now obtained replies from all the heads of departments, concerning the additional accommodations requisite for the convenient discharge of public duty, and for the preservation of the national records, deem it proper to submit the documents in a connected form, that the requirements of the public interest in this respect may be seen at a glance :*

Before entering on the accounts from the several departments, it may be well to present a *tabular statement* of the number and uses of the apartments contained in each of them, and also in the Capitol and Patent Office ; and this tabular statement may be appropriately preceded by a brief review of the condition of the edifices generally. These matters will enable the House better to understand the necessities and circumstances mentioned in the letters from the officers of the several departments. To begin, then, with

THE CAPITOL.

It will be seen, by reference to the table under this head, that though this building covers a great extent of ground—over 60,000 square feet—it does not furnish that accommodation for the public business which so large an area would warrant us to expect. It will be a matter of surprise to many, that the committee-rooms in this building do not exceed 40 in number, both on the Senate and House sides of the rotundo ; while there are in both houses 57 standing committees, besides select committees. This deficiency of rooms is a great drawback to the convenient transaction of the public business, as members attending committees have often experienced. Projects for enlarging the Capitol have engaged the attention of the House for several years, connected with the objects of constructing a new legislative hall, providing a larger room for the library, more accommodation for the officers of the House, a better position for the Supreme Court, and additional committee rooms.

The increase of the public business necessarily demands more room to be provided in this building. Upwards of twenty years have gone by since the completion of the Capitol ; and if, at that period, the *present* accommodations were necessary, we may infer that they must be very inadequate now. In proof of this, we find that many alterations have been made, at various times, to increase the business space within the walls, by cramping

the corridors with combustible closets, building out into the courts, and making two tiers of rooms where only one was before.

These facts tend to prove the imperious necessity of the early action of Congress to adopt measures for increasing the dimensions of the building, so as to meet the increasing and pressing wants of the public business. Your committee would, therefore, respectfully recommend the following joint resolution :

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That the President of the United States be, and he is hereby, authorized to cause a plan or plans, to be submitted to Congress at its next session, for the enlargement of the Capitol, which shall have reference to providing a new hall of Representatives, with suitable offices and committee-rooms adjacent,—converting the present hall into a congressional library room, and arranging the present library room for the use of the Supreme Court.

#### THE WAR AND NAVY DEPARTMENTS.

The table under this head shows the pressing wants of these departments, not only for office room for the convenient transaction of the public business, but that their records should be placed in safety from the ravages of fire. It will be seen that all the buildings occupied by these departments are of a combustible character, and exposed every moment to be destroyed, with all their valuable contents. Several of these buildings have already been subject to fire ; but fortunately preserved from total destruction, under favorable circumstances, by vigilant action.

The reports from each bureau show the imminent danger to which the public records are now exposed from this cause. *The value of these records is incalculable.* Their loss would involve the government in *endless trouble,* and the *expenditure of millions of money.* Measures cannot be taken too early to erect fire-proof buildings, for the safekeeping of these valuable records. Repeated warnings have been given us to guard against this evil, by the losses from fire in the burning of the Treasury Department, General Post Office, and Patent Office—all within a few years. Several years must elapse yet, under the appropriations proposed at this session for erecting fire-proof buildings, before these records could be placed in safety. The delay, therefore, of another year will increase the risk. Your committee, under such solemn considerations, cannot but urge upon the House the expediency and necessity of immediate action in commencing these buildings, and of taking prompt measures for securing the public records until the new fire-proof edifices are completed.

#### THE TREASURY BUILDING.

By the accompanying reports from the Treasury Department, it will be seen that further accommodations for office-room are required. Two of the bureaus belonging to this department have rooms in the State Department, much to the inconvenience of the latter, as compelling it to deposit its valuable papers in the garrets of the building, which are much crowded ; and, in the event of a fire, those records could not be saved.

Another bureau of the Treasury Department has to do business in a private house. The present crowded state of the Treasury building, and its

rapidly increasing demands for more room, which, in two years, (the time it would take to erect a suitable building,) would greatly retard the convenient transaction of the public business, induce your committee to recommend that this building be extended according to the original design, as approved by the President of the United States.

It is a remarkable fact in the history of the executive buildings in this city, that, in the removal of the offices to Washington in 1800, *two* buildings only, of the size of the present Navy building, were necessary to accommodate all the public offices. In one of these buildings were the following departments, and their clerks, viz: Secretary of State, Secretary of War, Secretary of the Navy, Postmaster General, and Commissioner of Patents. In the other building was the Treasury Department, with its several bureaus.

In 1818 five such buildings were required, including that for the General Post Office. At this time the Treasury Department still occupied but one building—its bureaus being distributed among the other departments. In 1839, when the new fire-proof buildings were finished, (which contained *four times* the accommodation of the former burnt building,) every habitable room was occupied by the Treasury Department, *and still several of its bureaus were not accommodated there.*

The War and Navy Departments, though not increasing in the same ratio with the Treasury, were, after the war, obliged to add to their office-room: the former, by renting several private houses containing as many rooms as the department building does; and the latter, by disposing of bureaus belonging to other departments in the State building. The reports from both of these departments show the present crowded state of each.

It is good policy in the government to provide, at an early day, *a safe deposite for its public records*, and convenient buildings for the transaction of the public business. The rapid increase of business should be provided for in time. As it must be done, measures should be taken to meet the requisition as soon as the demand shall be made, and great care should be taken, meantime, for the preservation of the records.

#### THE PATENT OFFICE.

The increase of this office has been rapid indeed, when we see, from what has been said, that, a little more than forty years ago, all its business was transacted in *one small room* in the present Navy building. The building that now encloses its valuable records and models, is at least double the size of the building of which it formerly occupied but a single room. However ample the space now occupied by this office, additional room is needed to display its treasures for the public information. The models are now so crowded together, that they cannot be examined with any advantage. One of the wing buildings (for erecting which an appropriation should now be made) is essential for the convenient transaction of the present business of this office.

#### THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT.

The rapid increase of business in this department may be inferred from what has been already said. Commencing with two rooms in the Navy building in 1800, it requires now eighty rooms of larger dimensions; and

these do not suffice to meet the business of this department: it has to use the cellars and some outbuildings to deposit its papers in. A part of the square upon which this building is erected still remains to be purchased; and your committee would call the attention of the House to the expediency of authorizing the Postmaster General to secure this purchase, and make the necessary appropriations to enable him to do it, as mentioned in an amendment to the pending appropriation bill.

*Statement relating to the accommodations furnished by the several department buildings, and the capitol.*

**CAPITOL.—Fire proof.**

*Sub-basement story.*

	No. of rooms.
West projection, committee rooms of the House	4
Do do do of the Senate	3
Room of Commissioner of Public Buildings	1
Refectories, Senate and House	4
	<hr/> 12

*Basement story.*

West projection, committee rooms of the House	6
Do do do of the Senate	6
	<hr/> 12
South wing, committee rooms of the House	8
Do lumber rooms do	9
	<hr/> 17
North wing, Supreme Court room	1
Do officers of court	7
Do law library room	1
Do stationery room	1
	<hr/> 10
Centre building, crypt	1

*Principal story.*

West projection, congressional library room	1
Rooms attached to do	2
Rooms of Clerk of the House	3
Committee room of Senate	1
	<hr/> 7
South wing, hall of the House	1
Officers', stationery, and lobby rooms of the House	6
	<hr/> 7
North wing, Senate chamber	1
Do officers of the Senate room	9
	<hr/> 10

*Attic, or third story.*

	No. of rooms.
West projection, committee rooms of House - - - -	7
South wing, galleries of House - - - -	2
Document and House library rooms - - - -	2
	<hr/> 11
North wing, galleries of Senate - - - -	2
Committee rooms of Senate - - - -	5
Stationery and lumber rooms - - - -	2
	<hr/> 9
Total* - - - -	<hr/> 95

TREASURY BUILDING.—*Fire proof.**Basement story.*

Clerks' rooms - - - -	14
Lumber rooms - - - -	17
Watchmen's rooms - - - -	2
Furnace rooms - - - -	5
	<hr/> 38

*Principal story.*

Clerks' rooms - - - -	32
Treasury vaults - - - -	2
Stationery and lumber rooms - - - -	4
	<hr/> 38

*Second story.*

Secretary and clerks' rooms, and library - - - -	33
Messengers' rooms - - - -	3
Stationery and lumber rooms - - - -	3
	<hr/> 39

*Attic, or third story.*

Clerks' rooms - - - -	34
Messengers' and stationery rooms - - - -	4
Library room - - - -	1
	<hr/> 39

Total - - - - - 154

WAR DEPARTMENT BUILDING.—*Not fire proof.*

<i>First story.</i> —Clerks' rooms - - - -	16
<i>Second story.</i> —Secretary and clerk's rooms - - - -	16
<i>Garret story.</i> —Lumber and stationery rooms - - - -	12
	<hr/> 44
<i>Cellar story.</i> —Lumber and fuel - - - -	16
	<hr/> 60
Total - - - - -	<hr/> 60

\*There are but 25 committee rooms of the House, while there are 35 standing committees, besides the select committees. On the Senate side, there are but 15 committee rooms, while there are 23 standing committees.



NAVY DEPARTMENT BUILDING.—*Not fire proof.*

Has nearly the same accommodations as the War Department

No. of rooms.

- 40

STATE DEPARTMENT BUILDING.—*Not fire proof.*

Secretary and clerks' rooms in first and second stories	-	32
Garret rooms for lumber and stationery	-	10
		<hr/> 42

Cellar story, used for fuel	-	16
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Total	-	<hr/> 58
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POST OFFICE BUILDING.—*Fire proof.*

<i>First story.</i> —Clerks' rooms	-	22
Messengers' rooms	-	2
<i>Second story.</i> —Postmaster General's and clerks' rooms	-	23
Messengers' rooms	-	3
<i>Third story.</i> —Clerks' rooms	-	24
Messengers' rooms	-	2
		<hr/> 76

<i>Cellar story.</i> —Fuel and lumber	-	23
Furnace rooms	-	3
		<hr/> 26

Total	-	<hr/> 102
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PATENT OFFICE BUILDING.—*Fire proof.**Basement story.*

Large model room	-	1
National Institute's room	-	1
Watchmen's room	-	1
Furnace and fuel rooms	-	4
Machinist and lumber rooms	-	9
		<hr/> 16

*Principal story.*

Model room	-	1
Commissioner and clerks', stationery and lumber rooms	-	14
		<hr/> 15

*Second story.*

Grand exhibition room, (equal to 18 rooms)	-	1
Total	-	<hr/> 32

With these preliminary observations on the condition of the national edifices at Washington, the Committee on Public Buildings deem it proper

now to submit the statements elicited from the State and Treasury Departments, in reference to the want of *more room* for convenience, and *safer room* for defence against fire. The statements from the officers of the War and Navy Departments were submitted in former reports by this committee.—Vide Reps. Nos. 20 and 89.

From these reports, Congress and the people at large can readily determine what extent and character of additions are now required, to render the public buildings suitable for the public interests, in the prompt transaction of business and safe preservation of records.

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*Letter to the President of the United States.*

COMMITTEE ROOM OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS,  
*Washington, December 30, 1844.*

The President of the United States is requested to direct the Secretary of War to furnish the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds with such maps, engravings, or lithographs of the public buildings, with the plans as proposed to be erected for the further improvement of said public buildings—with the estimated cost of the same, and such other aid as the committee may desire.

Z. PRATT, *Chairman.*

JOHN TYLER,  
*President of the United States.*

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*Letter to the Secretary of State.*

COMMITTEE ROOM OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS,  
*January 15, 1845.*

SIR: The Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds are desirous to ascertain what new buildings, or what extension of the present buildings, may be necessary for the proper accommodation of the officers of your department, and for the preservation of the valuable archives and property belonging to it. You are, therefore, respectfully requested to direct the heads of the different branches of your department to communicate information in regard to the following points:

1. Whether the number of rooms at present disposable is sufficient for the transaction of business; and for the preservation of, and ready access to, the archives of the department.

2. What additional rooms (if any) would be required for those purposes.

3. Whether the safety of the archives of the department is secured by the present mode of keeping them.

The committee desire to know from you, on a review of the suggestions which may be thus made, what extensions or enlargement of the present building may be required, or what new buildings may be necessary, for the



transaction of public business, and the preservation of the public property in the custody of your department.

On behalf of the committee,

Z. PRATT, *Chairman.*

Hon. JOHN C. CALHOUN,  
*Secretary of State.*

[Similar inquiries were addressed to the Secretary of the Treasury, and to the Commissioner of the Patent Office; and the replies will be found in due order.]

*Letter from the Commissioner of the Patent Office.*

PATENT OFFICE, December 23, 1844.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of yours of the 21st, inquiring what further room is needed at the Patent Office.

I hasten to reply, that, upon the re-organization of the Patent Office, the large hall now used for exhibition of the objects collected by the exploring expedition, was designed for the patented models, and the exhibition of unpatented models, together with specimens of manufactures. For want of room, I cannot receive either unpatented models, or specimens of manufactures. If, however, I had the use of the room in the large hall, I could gladly receive both. Besides these, there are several thousands of rejected models. These ought to be shown, and are equally important for patentees to examine, to determine the expediency of applying for patents. A cursory view of our models, piled on top of each other, will show our wants; indeed, unless something is done soon, this bureau will be much embarrassed. Room could easily be provided to accommodate all, by adding a wing on the west side, as was intended in the original plan. I have urged this matter upon Congress for several years, and seriously hope some relief will soon be given.

I will only add, the enlargement of the Patent Office building might accommodate for many years professors, if appointed, under the Smithsonian fund.

Yours, most respectfully,

H. L. ELLSWORTH.

Hon. ZADOCK PRATT,  
*Chairman Com. Public Buildings.*

*Statements respecting the Treasury Department.*

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,  
January 23, 1845.

I have the honor to enclose the information desired by the Committee on Public Buildings.

Very respectfully, yours, &c.,

GEO. M. BIBB.

Hon. Z. PRATT,  
*Chairman of the Committee on Public Buildings,  
House of Representatives.*

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,  
*Third Auditor's Office, January 20, 1845.*

SIR: The letter of the honorable Z. Pratt, chairman of the Committee on Public Buildings, House of Representatives, which you referred to me for a report on the following points of information required by the committee, viz: "1st. Whether the number of rooms at present disposable is sufficient for the transaction of business, and the preservation and ready access to the archives of their branch of the department; 2d. What additional rooms would be required for their purposes; 3d. Whether the safety of the archives of the department is secured by the present mode of keeping them,"—I have the honor, herewith, to return; and to state that, in regard to the sufficiency of the rooms allotted to this office for the transaction of business, the number is found ample; but great inconvenience arises in the transaction of business; from their scattered location in the building; causing, thereby, much waste of time in the general superintendence and daily necessary communication with each. In respect to the preservation of the public archives in charge of this office, they are now principally kept in the basement rooms of the building, where about three hundred boxes of accounts and vouchers (with a vast number of other accounts placed on shelves and stands) are exposed to accumulating dust and a constant damp atmosphere; from which, stoves and fires in the rooms are not found to be sufficient entirely to preserve them from injury. A fire-proof room or rooms of sufficient dimensions to contain the public records in charge of the Register of the Treasury and of this office, built separately, or constructed in an addition to the present building, would give security to the records; and rooms adjoining, for the accommodation of the persons employed, being assigned to them, would afford facilities in the general operations of business, which this office greatly feels the want of.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
PETER HAGNER, *Auditor.*

HON. GEORGE M. BIBB,  
*Secretary of the Treasury.*

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,  
*Register's Office, January 20, 1845.*

SIR: In replying to your reference to this office of the letter of the chairman of the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, I beg leave to submit a copy of a letter that I addressed to the honorable Walter Forward, late Secretary of the Treasury, dated 4th February, 1842, being an appropriate reply to the inquiries of the committee:

"I have the honor, in compliance with your reference of the resolution of the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, to state that it is very desirable, for the more ready despatch of public business, and the better preservation of the public records, that other and more appropriate accommodations should be furnished than those now occupied by this office. Under the present arrangement, the business is conducted in five detached parts—some on the first, and others on the second floors of the building; and the practical effect is, to separate the clerks by inconvenient distances,

whose operations should be through a continuous chain of direct communication. Another great inconvenience is experienced from the defective construction of the rooms as to size, and the facilities of filing away and preserving the public records; and this is without remedy within the limits of the present building. The constant accumulation of public papers renders additional accommodations necessary from year to year; and as all the room that can be made available is insufficient for present purposes, it is important that further provision be made in reference to these requirements."

Since this letter was given to the late Secretary, nothing has taken place in the arrangement and occupancy of the rooms connected with this office, to lessen the necessity of further accommodations for the benefit of public business; and it may be proper to remark, that the basement part of the Treasury building is so damp at all seasons of the year, as to render it an unsafe depository for papers; and yet, for the want of better accommodations, we are compelled to use that part of the building as file rooms for a large portion of the books and papers of this office.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

T. L. SMITH.

HON. GEORGE M. BIBB,  
*Secretary of the Treasury.*

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TREASURY DEPARTMENT,  
February 20, 1845.

SIR: In accordance with the verbal request made by you at the department a few days since, I have the honor to transmit, herewith, a copy of a report made to me by Professor A. D. Bache, superintendent of coast survey and of the work on weights and measures, in reference to the public property connected with both these works, together with the condition, in regard to security and accommodation, of the buildings occupied by said works.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEO. M. BIBB,  
*Secretary of the Treasury.*

HON. Z. PRATT,  
*Chairman of Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds,  
House of Representatives.*

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OFFICE OF THE COAST SURVEY,  
February 8, 1845.

SIR: In compliance with the directions contained in your letter of the 3d instant, I have the honor to submit a report on the security of the buildings now occupied for the purposes of the coast survey, and in reference to the question of more safe and suitable accommodations, and of their extent.

The archives of the survey of the coast, which are the results of much labor, and have been obtained at considerable cost, are deposited in buildings rented for the purposes of an office, no parts of which are fire-proof.

The roof of the building was slated some years since, to prevent danger in case of fire in the adjoining houses, or from the chimneys of the houses themselves. The remedy is of doubtful efficacy in reference to the latter contingency, as the brick-work of the flues is by no means substantial. The instruments, journals, and charts are deposited on the first floor, in rooms opening upon the street, and, within the past year, small cases have been made for the journals, which can be easily carried; so that, in the event of fire, they may be easily removed from the building. A night watch has been established within the same period. There is, however, much property of other kinds, consisting of plates in the course of engraving or already engraved, paper for printing, and printed maps, manuscript maps in the course of completion, books, and office papers, which would almost inevitably be lost if the buildings take fire. And, in the confusion, the instruments would, if saved, be injured, and many of the original maps and charts would be lost.

The valuable property of the weights and measures is in a building connected with the two just referred to, and not fire-proof. The machinery and apparatus, as well as the standards of length and capacity, and the balances in different stages of progress, would probably be much injured, if not destroyed, should the buildings take fire.

There is no room for a fire-proof of sufficient size within these buildings, nor could the property be conveniently deposited in one; nor have we a lease of the property to justify expenditure upon it. A fire-proof erected out of doors would be exposed to robbery, besides being liable to the objections above stated, and to be crushed by the falling of the high walls of the main building, if placed within any moderate distance from the office. The true remedy for the state of things just referred to, would be to erect a suitable building in connexion with the Treasury Department, or elsewhere, for the work. At its termination, a part of the rooms would be needed for the preservation of the archives, and for containing the supply of maps and charts; and the rest would be useful for offices, or for the deposit of the constantly accumulating property of the department.

In regard to the suitableness of the present accommodations, I may observe that many of the operations, mechanical as well as scientific, would go on much better in buildings specially adapted to them.

The extent of the accommodations required may be inferred from the space now occupied. The number of rooms used by the coast survey would, however, need increase if all the parties were assembled at Washington. They are—for drawing and calculating, 8 rooms; for engraving and printing, 6 rooms; for workshops, 3 rooms; for the deposit of instruments, 1 room; for the deposit of the journals of the survey, calculations, and original maps and charts, 3 rooms; for books and printed maps, offices, and store-rooms, 3 rooms. For the different purposes of the weights and measures, the number of rooms occupied is as follows: for workshops, 8 rooms—the foundry being in a detached building; for store rooms, 7 rooms; for adjusting measures, and deposit of finished work, 3 rooms; for offices and rooms for the person in charge of the buildings, 5 rooms—making for the two establishments 48 rooms. For the three houses containing these rooms, an annual rent of \$1,050 is paid. They have together a front of 92 feet, and the depth of the block is 49 feet; the southern one has a back building 50 feet by 30 wide, and two stories high. In front, there are three stories above ground, and one below; and in the rear, five stories from

the ground. A building 150 feet by 50, or one furnishing an equivalent area, with a basement and three stories above ground, would give the number of rooms required, and of suitable size.

Very respectfully yours,

A. D. BACHE.

Hon. GEORGE M. BIBB,  
*Secretary of the Treasury.*

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#### WAR AND NAVY DEPARTMENTS—PROPOSED NEW EDIFICE FOR THEM.

In addition to the warnings of prudence and economy—admonishing us against a recurrence of such calamities as destroyed the former Post Office and Treasury Departments and Patent Office—we have the strongest testimony from the heads of the War and Navy Departments, and from the chiefs of every bureau in those departments, (as is shown in the documents accompanying our previous report of December 31,) that about treble the present extent of rooms is absolutely necessary to accommodate the public officers in the convenient discharge of the public business in both departments.

The building proposed by your committee for the accommodation of the War and Navy Departments, is designed to correspond substantially in its ground-plan with the edifice intended (when completed) for the accommodation of the State and Treasury Departments—flanking the President's grounds at their eastern and western extremities; but the superstructure will conform to the architecture of the Post Office Department, admired alike for beauty and convenience.

But it is deemed needless to enlarge upon the subject in the way of argument. The concurrent testimony of the officers of the War and Navy Departments, as shown in the former report of your committee, demonstrates the indispensable necessity for increased accommodations; and what citizen will deny the propriety of rendering fire-proof all future erections of this kind, especially when he reflects on the vast losses and difficulties occasioned by the destruction of the former Treasury and Post Office buildings and the Patent Office? A plain statement in facts and figures, derived from the testimony of the officers of the War and Navy Departments, elicited by the inquiries addressed to them by your committee, may be appropriately introduced here:



*Statement of the number of rooms now occupied by the different bureaus of the War and Navy Departments, and the number required and to be provided for in fire-proof building.*

## I.—WAR DEPARTMENT.

	No. of rooms now occupied.	No. of rooms re- quired in new fire- proof building.
<i>Bureaus in rented buildings, not fire-proof.</i>		
Chief Engineer - - - -	5	6
Topographical Engineer - - -	7	9
Ordnance - - - -	6	8
Commissary General of Subsistence -	3	5
Paymaster General - - - -	3	5
Pension Office - - - -	6	11
Surgeon General - - - -	4	5
Total number of rented rooms -	34	
<i>War Department building, not fire-proof.</i>		
Secretary's rooms - - - -	8	10
Commanding General - - - -	2	5
Adjutant General - - - -	5	8
Quartermaster General - - - -	5	7
Indian Bureau - - - -	8	9
Second Auditor - - - -	6	10
Rooms in all the buildings now occupied -	68	
Rooms required in new building - -	-	98

## II.—NAVY DEPARTMENT.

	No. of rooms now occupied.	No. of rooms re- quired in new fire- proof building.
<i>Navy Department building, not fire-proof.</i>		
Secretary and his clerks - - -	9	14
Bureau of Yards and Docks - - -	3	4
Bureau of Construction - - -	6	10
Bureau of Ordnance and Hydrography -	5	6
Bureau of Medicine and Surgery -	3	5
Bureau of Provisions, &c. - - -	3	5
Engineer corps - - - -	1	2
Fourth Auditor - - - -	7	15
Total rooms - - - -	37	61



## RECAPITULATION.

Grand total of rooms <i>now occupied</i> by officers of the War and Navy Departments, in <i>public and private</i> buildings, <i>none of which are fire-proof</i> - - - - -	105
Additional rooms <i>now required</i> in a new fire-proof building, for the safe and convenient discharge of duty by officers in those departments - - - - -	52
<hr/>	
Whole number of rooms <i>now actually required</i> for the present business of the War and Navy Departments - - - - -	157
Whole number of rooms in the <i>north</i> and <i>south wings</i> proposed to be first erected in the plan of a building for the War and Navy Departments - - - - -	160

The whole edifice, when completed, will contain about 260 rooms, all of which will be wanted for the additional business of the two departments, before the lapse of time required in the completion of the *centre* of the edifice; which central part will contain about 100 rooms.

The structure will be four stories high, with rooms generally 18 by 22 feet, and 14 feet high. The whole length of the edifice, when the central building, as well as the wings, are completed, will be about 600 feet; corresponding nearly in length with the building for the Treasury and State Departments, when that shall be completed. Each wing will be about 200 feet long.

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As a specimen of the statements from the heads of departments and chiefs of bureaux, elicited by the inquiries of your committee, the following brief synopsis of the replies of those officers is now respectfully submitted in this connexion.

Colonel Totten, of the Engineer Department, says the office of the engineer corps "is in a very dangerous position as regards fire;" for, "though such precautions are taken within doors that it is next to impossible for fire to originate there, the danger from without is imminent." Colonel Totten recommends "the hiring, without delay, of some building less exposed to this danger," &c. "There is a vast amount of information confided to this depository, which is of a nature exposing it to daily reference and use, and of which the loss would be irreparable. As it cannot be stowed away in fire-proof storehouses, but must be kept at hand in the occupied rooms, the whole building should be secure; and, at any rate, until Congress shall provide apartments entirely safe, such a building should be occupied as will afford at least reasonable security against this danger." "The danger is so great, that I have felt it incumbent on me to lay the matter repeatedly before your predecessors." "It seems to me that there cannot be a doubt as to the propriety of enlarging the public buildings; on the score of *economy*. Those who have the means of calculating the relative *expense* under the two systems, are better able to speak touching that point than I am. As to *safety*, it is not possible to doubt that an immediate enlargement of the public buildings is of the highest and most pressing necessity. Much might be said on the score of *convenience*—not *personal* convenience, but

convenience in the despatch of public business." "I trust Congress will not continue the present risk another session."

Colonel Abert, of the topographical engineer corps, says that his bureau is in a building unfit, leaky, and damp, with much exposure of valuable records. "The records and property exposed, under present temporary arrangements," says Colonel Abert, "are extremely valuable; and, if destroyed, could not be replaced in many years, nor without expending *many hundred thousand dollars*. True economy, therefore, would seem to be essentially involved in the early erection of adequate fire-proof buildings."

General Jesup, Quartermaster General, reports that "additional rooms are required, not only for the transaction of business, but for the preservation of the plans, returns, and records of the office." "Most of the papers," he adds, "are now kept in a damp basement room, where, it is apprehended, they will be seriously injured, if not destroyed, in the course of a few years."

General Gibson, Commissary General of Subsistence, mentions that more room is required, and in better quarters, as the records are much exposed, and the building has been *on fire three times*.

General Towson, Paymaster General, says the building occupied by his bureau is neither safe nor convenient, and the records are much exposed to accidents from fire.

Colonel Talcott, of the Ordnance Bureau, mentions that the documents of that office are much exposed; and that, if destroyed, it would be exceedingly difficult to repair the loss and inconvenience.

J. L. Edwards, esq., Commissioner of Pensions, reports that the rooms occupied by his bureau are mostly uncomfortable and inconvenient. The records have to be stowed in a cellar, (under the office of the Secretary of War,) "so damp, that in summer it is found necessary to dispel the dampness by fire." All the officers of his bureau, except two clerks, are in hired quarters.

Thus much for some of the officers quartered in private buildings, hired for their accommodation.

The officers occupying rooms in the War building itself, are equally emphatic in expressing opinions concerning the necessity of better means for preserving the public records, while most of them state that much additional room is required for the convenient despatch of public business.

Major General Scott remarks, that the rooms for the accommodation of his officers are "entirely insufficient;" and "the time of individuals having business with the commanding general is thus frequently lost, as well as public business most effectually retarded."

The Commissioner of Indian Affairs, T. Hartley Crawford, esq., remarks, that "the truest economy will consist in securing the public records against the possibility of destruction, although a larger sum of money may be expended than the principal of what is now used annually," &c. "In by far the most important requisite of a depository of public papers and records of inestimable value, and which, once lost, can never be replaced—in the security which ought to be afforded against destruction by fire—the rooms occupied by the Indian Office are utterly defective, being no more fire-proof than any other brick building in Washington, and only safer by reason of the watch which is kept over them."

Major Thomas, assistant adjutant general, says, "The records in the basement rooms, at present in good order, are becoming injured by damp-

ness, and, like those in the attic, are inconvenient for reference." "For the safety of the records," he adds, "additional rooms are actually necessary; and it is all-important that any buildings which may be projected should be fire-proof. The records of the Adjutant General's office give the *military* history of every officer and soldier, and their loss could not be replaced. Not only would the loss of these records to the *government* be great, but likewise to *individuals*, as they contain facts scarcely elsewhere to be obtained, upon which unsettled claims for services rendered can be fairly adjusted."

In transmitting to the Committee on Public Buildings the replies from the several chiefs of bureaus in his department, the Hon. William Wilkins, Secretary of War, remarked that he had "felt constrained to refer, in his late annual report, to the necessity of further accommodation for the bureaus and archives of this department." And he added, in his letter to Colonel Pratt, that, "in addition to the very great interruption and inconvenience to the public service, by having *the bureaus* of this department *scattered and detached* from the War Office in private buildings, (the annual expense for rent of these hired offices being \$3,350,) there is still a more important consideration—as *the hired buildings now occupied contain most important records, maps, plans and models*, THE LOSS OF MANY OF WHICH COULD NOT BE REPAIRED." The condition of the War building itself, though "more secure (from being better watched) than ordinary brick buildings," is yet defective enough—as even it is not fire-proof, &c.

It will be seen that, in the above synopsis, we have confined our attention to the condition of the bureaus of the War Department. Are the bureaus of the Navy Department in much (if any) better condition?

The Secretary of the Navy, the Hon. John Y. Mason, in his letter to Colonel Pratt, after alluding to the reports from the chiefs of bureaus respecting the additional and fire-proof rooms required in that branch of the public service, invites the Committee on Public Buildings, "by a personal examination, to see the condition of the building occupied by this department—fully assured that *a more convincing proof* could not be given of the expediency (and, indeed, absolute necessity) of the additional room asked for."

The letters of Commodore Warrington, Commodore Crane, Commodore Shubrick, and of Messrs. Haswell, Harris, and Dayton, respecting the condition of their several bureaus, concur substantially with the statements already given touching the imperative necessity for apartments of larger size and proof against fire; and Commodore Morris, while acting Secretary of the Navy, in December, wrote that "the arrangements of the present building afford no effectual protection for the records and papers of the department against danger from fire, and the importance of such provision is too obvious to require any comment."

These statements present some facts which will probably surprise many of our fellow-citizens. It appears, for instance, that the War Department is now actually *paying rent* for as many additional rooms in private buildings as it has rooms in the edifice purposely erected for its accommodation! And for the whole number of rooms *hired* for the purposes of the War and Navy Departments, there is now paid an aggregate of rents amounting annually to several thousand dollars! This consideration is impressed upon the mind more strongly, by the fact that the scattering of the public offices among private buildings largely increases the danger of the public

records from fire and other casualties; and it is sufficiently remarkable that not a single office of the War or Navy Departments, whether kept in public or private buildings, is fire-proof. Additional to all this, and worthy of much consideration, is the great inconvenience and loss of time in transacting business among offices and records scattered over various buildings, public and private.

It will be seen, by the estimates of Mr. Strickland, architect, that the probable cost of the north and south wings, which your committee recommend to be immediately commenced, will range from \$375,000 to \$480,000, according to the materials employed; that these wings, as shown on plan A, will contain 160 rooms of good size; and that the whole edifice, when the wings can be connected by a central part, to be erected when the present War and Navy buildings can be removed, will contain 264 rooms, all of them fire-proof, and built in the best manner. A large portion of all these rooms are actually required for the convenient and safe transaction of the present business of the War and Navy Departments; and it is evident that the increase of business consequent on the increase of our population, the extension of our government over the vast regions of Texas and Oregon, and other important causes, will require perhaps the whole of the increased accommodations before the expiration of the years required for the completion of the structure according to the project submitted by your committee.

The committee would respectfully recommend that suitable buildings be erected in the square opposite the President's mansion, for the residence of the several heads of departments.

With these remarks, your committee will close for the present, by referring your honorable body to the accompanying statements from Messrs. Strickland and Mills, architects, whose talents have been invoked in exemplifying the plans of your committee for the proposed War and Navy edifice, in addition to the valuable assistance derived, and already published, from the chief and other officers of the Topographical Bureau.

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#### LETTERS REFERRED TO IN THE PRECEDING REPORT.

*From Mr. Pratt to Colonel Abert.*

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
Washington, January 21, 1845.

SIR: Will you cause a plan to be drawn, for the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, of a fire-proof building for the War and Navy Departments, showing ground-plan and elevation, with estimates for the same, whether constructed of marble or granite? It is proposed by the committee that the building shall be made substantially conformable, in its ground-plan, to the Treasury building now partly completed; but that it shall, in its superstructure, conform more to the beautiful and convenient arrangement of the Post Office Department, in the size and height of the rooms, the width of the halls, &c. The location of the proposed building will include the sites of the War and Navy edifices; though the north and south wings, proposed to be erected first, will not interfere with those edifices at present.

More particulars will be communicated in verbal communications with Mr. Strickland, the architect.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Z. PRATT, *Chairman.*

Col. J. J. ABERT,

*Of the Topographical Engineers.*

WASHINGTON, January 27, 1845.

SIR: In conformity with your call upon Colonel J. J. Abert, by letter dated January 21, 1845, I have, agreeably to his request, made a ground-plan and elevation of a fire-proof building, similar in dimensions, height of rooms, &c., to the General Post Office in Washington, and corresponding to the same structure in its exterior character.

Your plan for the War and Navy buildings I have endeavored to carry out by the accompanying drawings, by making north and south front wings 20 feet back from the line of the President's square, and running down 17th street about 600 feet.

I now proceed to give you an estimate of the cost of these buildings in granite, marble, and brick roughcast.

1st. If marble is used, as in the General Post Office, both of the wings (that is, the north and south buildings) will contain 160 rooms, of the size of 18 feet by 22 feet, and the height of the ceilings 13 feet in the clear; 4 stories in height, (the attic story to be lighted from the roof, for the purposes of drawing and mapping the various objects of the departments with respect to their bureaus,) will cost \$480,000.

2d. If these buildings are constructed with granite basements, marble columns and pilasters, cornices, steps, sills, and arched throughout in the manner of the Post Office, and the superstructure of the walls faced with bricks, and roughcast, or coated over with oil mastic, which is practised in Europe and in the Atlantic cities of this country, the cost of the two wings will be \$375,000.

The one wing on the Pennsylvania avenue, containing 56 rooms, and intended for the War Department, constructed as above, will cost \$187,000. By referring to the plan, you will find that the present War and Navy Departments contain each 32 rooms—making 64 in all; 44 rooms are hired in private buildings, and a large additional number of fire-proof rooms are now actually required. In carrying out your plan, when there is a necessity from the wants of these departments, the entire accommodation will consist of 264 rooms, all of them fire-proof, and built in the most durable and substantial manner. When this is done, there will be a correspondence in the contemplated block of buildings with that of the Treasury, to the east of the President's house.

Respectfully submitted by your obedient servant,

WILLIAM STRICKLAND, *Architect.*

Hon. Z. PRATT,

*Chairman of the Committee*

*on Public Buildings and Grounds.*



WASHINGTON, *January 20, 1845.*

DEAR SIR : In submitting the accompanying plans for the War and Navy fire-proof buildings, permit me to enter into some explanations and comparisons in connexion with other plans submitted for these buildings.

The character of design which I have had the honor to prepare, under the direction of your committee, embraces the idea of a connected building; as offering superior advantages for the transaction of the public business, and greater economy in construction, over detached buildings, affording equal accommodations. To exemplify this, we will assume the dimensions of two buildings like those occupied by the departments, 160 feet long, and 56 feet wide; the circuit of faced wall in both buildings would be 864 feet. Now, if we connect these two buildings together, end to end, we shall have one 320 feet in length, and 56 feet in width; the circuit of faced walls of which would be 752 feet, or 112 feet less than the other, besides the saving of a thick end wall. This difference of 112 feet, if of cut stone, would amount to a considerable sum, but would be reduced if faced with pressed brick. Besides a saving in this respect, there would be a reduction in the number of windows and doors, and their ornaments, which, on two ends, would not be necessary in the connected plan. Upon the smallest calculation, therefore, the saving in these two plans of building would be equal to \$10,000.

There is another point of expense that I would call your attention to, connected with the proposed plan of detached buildings: It relates to the substitution of cast-iron in place of brick arched floors. If this plan should be recommended on the ground of economy, it will be found, by a comparison with brick arches, that the iron floors will cost at least one-third more than the brick, which, in the final estimate of the building, would amount to \$10,000 more. Here, then, are two items in the plan of the separate buildings, which would increase the cost over the other plan \$20,000. Economy, therefore, could not enter into the calculation of detached buildings in place of those connected. There is another and more serious objection to the use of cast iron in the way proposed, from its known powers of expansion and contraction by a change of temperature. This quality in the iron would endanger the safety of the buildings; and some sad evidences of this are on record, where the walls of a large theatre were thrown down by the expansion of its iron roof; and the dome of a large conservatory fell in from the same cause—both in London. Floors made of this material would be always in motion, and cracks would be always opening and closing where the iron joins with other materials.

But there are stronger grounds in favor of the connected building, not only from its facilitating the public business, by the proximity of the office rooms to each other, but by its producing that architectural harmony which the dignity of the building demands. And then, again, there should be some similarity in general outline with the other department buildings on the opposite side of the square, that when the whole square is laid down in plan, there should be no discrepancy of design observed. You may imagine how strange such a plan would appear, if it should represent a connected structure on one side, and four detached buildings in a row on the other.

In the diagram plan No 1, of the Executive square, annexed, I have represented the relative positions of all the buildings upon this square with each other. The position of the proposed War and Navy buildings is as-



sured to bear the same with that of the Treasury and State buildings, viewed from the President's house as the centre of the square. To these buildings is given the same general outline of plan with those on the opposite side of the square. For a fitting variety in architectural effect, there is a change in the detail, which diagram plan No. 2 will exhibit.

It will be seen, in the location of these buildings, that a special reference is had to keep the view, open, to and from the main fronts of the President's house, of all the avenues of approach to the same; the diverging lines north and south, relatively of the Pennsylvania and New York avenues, just touching the upper angles of the building; presenting a front from south to north, when the whole shall be completed, of about 500 feet—the length of the celebrated Parthenon at Athens. This position brings all the buildings into harmony with each other, as determined by the great avenues of approach to them from the NW., SW., NE., and SE., and seems to have entered into the original plan of the ingenious L'Enfant, when he designed and laid out the plat of the city. These lines of demarcation, formed by the main avenues leading to the President's house, were to be those within which the public buildings erected there should be kept; they could and should be brought up to touch them, that such may be rendered more conspicuous, and their architectural beauties better displayed. There is no reason why they should be kept back of these lines; on the ground of covering a portion of the ends of the President's house; because, in any event, the private houses on the opposite corners of the avenues will do this; and if the public building here is kept on this line, it will be seen to the best advantage, and the President's house will, in every case, form a beautiful object on the back ground of the picture.

I have touched on this subject, my dear sir, to show the warrant which would justify the locality of the south wing of the Treasury building, which has one corner encroaching on the north line of the Pennsylvania avenue drawn to the SE. corner of the President's mansion. There was an oversight on the part of the committee of the House that determined the site, and the extent of building which should be constructed on it; and hence the cause of the small encroachment of the south wing noticed above. In the future extension of the Treasury building north, its colonnade may be carried on to fill up the entire space, or to touch the south line of the New York avenue, as in the plan of the buildings on the other side is shown.

The diagram No. 2 exhibits a plan of the proposed building for the War and Navy Departments, as carried out to completion. The elevation on the same drawing shows its western façade, which presents in the centre an octostyle portico 80 feet front, and at each end a hexastyle screen of columns 60 feet front, with their entablature and blocking, all elevated on a high channeled basement, rising three stories above a sub-basement. The spaces between the porticos are ornamented with coupled pilasters of the same order with the columns, which divide the series of triple windows lighting the several stories. The plan is so arranged as to admit of the construction of such parts as will not interfere with the use of the present building during the progress of the new. The south building, referred to in the bill reported by your committee, will be located so far from the present Navy building, that its wing will or may not touch this building. The accommodations furnished by this south building will be 30 rooms on each floor, or 90 rooms on three floors, besides the basement—every room in the

Building to be made fire-proof. As respects the material for the facing of this building, we may infer, from the finish of the other fire-proof edifices in this city, that cut stone will be used; and it is subject to calculation, which of the materials—freestone, granite, or marble—will be found best adapted or most economical. The cost of the General Post Office building, compared with that of the Treasury and Patent Office buildings, foot for foot, will differ very little—the difference in the architectural finish being allowed for. This can be accounted for from the fact, that in the former building, the marble facing does not average more than nine inches thick; while in the latter buildings, many of the cut-stone blocks run through the whole thickness of the wall, from 2 to 2½ feet deep. This would operate in favor of the marble for facing the buildings outside.

Respectfully submitted.

ROBERT MILLS,  
*Architect.*

HON. ZADOCK PRATT,  
*Chairman of the Committee  
on Public Buildings and Grounds.*

*Minute estimate of the cost of the edifice proposed for the War and Navy Departments.*

BOSTON, February 17, 1845.

DEAR SIR: I have completed a sketch of a plan, as you requested me, for the War and Navy offices, endeavoring to keep in view your suggestions, so far as I could recollect. I have had but a short time to study the best arrangement, and have not been able to give anything more than an outline of the arrangement. There are many things to be carried out in such a building, to make the arrangement complete and comfortable, which it is not convenient to represent on so small a scale. I have made calculations for a perfect ventilation, in every room, by flues so constructed that a current of air shall be constantly kept up, whether the room is occupied or not. I have represented water closets in various parts of the buildings; also, vaults as "lock-ups" for valuable papers. I have shown but little of embellishments for so extensive a building; but that is a thing which may be added to, or not, as the taste of those having the control shall dictate, without any interference of interior arrangements. The cost of the building, complete in every respect, including all fixtures—such as water-closets, vaults, ventilating flues, mantels and grates, furnaces, &c., I make \$792,400.

The sums herein named may be relied on as what the building will cost, without any extra sums to be appropriated to carry out the plans in the fullest extent, as represented by the accompanying sketch.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

ISAIAH ROGERS.

ZADOCK PRATT, Esq.

*Estimated cost of building for the War and Navy offices at Washington, by  
Isaiah Rogers.*

For 2,300 feet square digging of cellars and trenches, at \$2	\$4,600 00
For 2,100 perches of stone for foundation, at \$5	10,500 00
For 105,000 superficial feet of granite ashlar, at \$1 25	131,250 00
For 1,750 feet of cornice for basement, at \$6	10,500 00
For 600 feet architrave band moulding, at \$4	2,400 00
For 2,350 feet of cornice of main building, at \$10	23,500 00
For 6 pilasters fluted, capitals and bases, \$5,000 each	30,000 00
For 8 ante, with capitals and bases complete, \$4,000 each	32,000 00
For 12 columns, with capitals and bases complete, at \$4,000	48,000 00
For 250,000 feet of vaulting bricks, laid in cement, at 75 cts.	187,500 00
For 250,000 feet of centering for vaulting, at 16 cents	40,000 00
For 65,000 feet of marble or other tile, at \$1	65,000 00
For 185,000 feet of floors complete over vaulting, at 15 cents	27,750 00
For 4,150,000 bricks laid in cement, in walls, at \$13	53,950 00
For 72,000 yards of plastering, at 30 cents	21,600 00
For 5,000 feet of mouldings, at 20 cents	1,000 00
For 700 doors complete, at \$20	14,000 00
For 682 windows complete, at \$25	17,050 00
For 55,000 feet of copper roof, at 40 cents	22,000 00
For 8 furnaces complete, at \$500	4,000 00
For ventilating-flues, complete	4,000 00
For 32 water-closets complete, at \$100	3,200 00
For 182 columns for the interior, (cast iron,) at \$50	9,100 00
For 3,000 feet of iron railing, at \$3	9,000 00
For 2,400 feet of skylight, complete, at \$1	2,400 00
For 14 flights of stairs, at \$20	2,800 00
For 4 vaults and bank locks, at \$500	2,000 00
For 266 mantels and grates, at \$50	13,300 00
	<hr/>
	792,400 00

PROPOSED RESIDENCES FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
Washington, February 8, 1845.

SIR: You are hereby respectfully requested to cause to be prepared, with the least practicable delay, plans and estimates for suitable buildings for the residences of the heads of departments. Said buildings to be erected in the square opposite to the presidential mansion. The buildings to be of brick, and four stories high. Particulars will be given to Mr. Strickland, the architect.

Respectfully, yours,

Z. PRATT,  
Chairman Com. Public Buildings and Grounds.

Col. ABERT,

Chief of the Topographical Engineer Corps.

BUREAU OF TOPOGRAPHICAL ENGINEERS,  
*Washington, February 14, 1845.*

SIR: In compliance with the request of your letter of the 8th instant, Mr. Strickland was set to work upon the plans and estimates for residences of the heads of the government departments, to be erected on the square opposite the President's mansion; and I have now the honor of sending the result of his labor, together with a copy of his report and estimate.

As the drawing now sent, as well as those previously furnished to the committee, are originals, may I beg of you the favor to direct that they be returned to this office, after the adjournment of Congress, for preservation and future reference?

Very respectfully, sir, your obedient servant,

J. J. ABERT,

*Col. Corps Topographical Engineers.*

HON. Z. PRATT,

*Chairman Com. on Public Buildings,  
 House of Representatives.*

WASHINGTON, *February 14, 1845.*

SIR: In pursuance of your instructions that I should prepare a plan and estimate for suitable buildings for the residences of the heads of the departments of the government, to be erected on the square opposite the presidential mansion, I have the honor to report to you the accompanying plan, elevation, and estimate, for five contiguous double buildings, each 50 feet square, and 4 stories in height.

The size of this square is 721 feet front on the Pennsylvania avenue, by 421 feet in depth north and south; and the space required for the contemplated buildings will be 250 by 200 feet, which will leave ample grounds in front and on the flanks for shrubbery walks and drives.

You will perceive by the plan, that the grounds in front of the square are laid out in the same manner as those of the President's, and that the buildings are to be 4 stories in height; the basement of granite; superstructure brick, coated with mastic. Each residence to form a double house, containing 4 rooms on each floor, with a piazza and back buildings; a portico and verandah in front; dimensions of each building 50 feet square, and the size of each room to be 20 by 24 feet, with sliding doors of communication. The estimated cost of each building, with stabling and ap-

purtenances, \$22,500	-	-	-	\$112,500 00
For forming the drives and walks in the same manner as at the President's square	-	-	-	8,000 00
Dwarf walls, coping, and gate-posts	-	-	-	15,800 00
Iron railing and gates	-	-	-	18,200 00
				<hr/>
				154,500 00
				<hr/>

Respectfully submitted by your obedient servant,  
 WILLIAM STRICKLAND, *Architect.*

Col. J. J. ABERT,

*Chief of the Corps of Top. Engineers.*

## DIAGRAM OF THE PUBLIC BUILDINGS, &amp;c.

WASHINGTON, *February 17, 1845.*

SIR: Please cause to be drawn a diagram and ground-plan of the President's square, together with the Treasury, State, and contemplated War and Navy buildings; and I request that you will have the plan lithographed, for the purpose of explaining and completing my next report to Congress.

I also desire that you would add my plan for the buildings for the five heads of the departments of the government on the square north of the President's house.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
Z. PRATT, *Chairman.*

Col. J. J. ABERT,  
*Chief of Corps Top Engineers.*